

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An office supply dispensing apparatus, comprising:
 - a cabinet defining an enclosed space and having at least one door, said at least one door having a secured position wherein access to said enclosed space is prevented;
 - at least one surface within said enclosed space, said at least one surface being configured to receive a quantity of an office supply item;
 - a controlled inventory arrangement comprising a memory for storing a programmable protocol, a processor for processing said programmable protocol, a user interface electrically connected to said processor, said user interface configured to receive a user identification input, a weight sensor electrically connected to said processor, wherein said weight sensor is operatively associated with said at least one surface to determine the weight of said quantity of said office supply item;
 - wherein said controlled inventory arrangement is configured to release said at least one door from said secured position in response to processing of said programmable protocol upon receiving an approved user identification input; and
 - wherein said controlled inventory arrangement is additionally configured to determine a change in said quantity of an office supply item in response to processing of said programmable protocol upon determining a change in weight of said quantity of said office supply item.
2. The office supply dispenser of Claim 1, wherein said at least one door comprises a plurality of doors, said controlled inventory arrangement being configured to release less than all of said plurality of doors from said secured position upon receiving an approved user identification input.
3. The office supply dispenser of Claim 1, wherein said controlled inventory arrangement additionally comprises a calibration interface electrically connected to said processor, said processor operating to modify said programmable protocol in response to calibration input into said calibration interface.
4. The office supply dispenser of Claim 1, wherein said controlled inventory arrangement additionally comprises at least one environmental sensor electrically connected

to said processor, said at least one environmental sensor operable to sense a change in an environmental condition, said processor operating to modify said programmable protocol in response to said change in said environmental condition.

5. The office supply dispenser of Claim 1, wherein said controlled inventory arrangement additionally comprises a remote data port for communicating with a remote database.

6. The office supply dispenser of Claim 1, wherein said user interface comprises a magnetic strip card reader.

7. A method of controlled dispensing of office supplies, comprising:
providing a secured selection of office supply items, each of said office supply items having a known weight;
authenticating the identification of a user of said office supply items;
asking said user to select a transaction account;
allowing said user to access a portion of said selection of said office supply items according to predetermined user access rights;
determining a quantity of said office supply items added or removed by said user by determining a change in weight of said office supply items;
recording said addition or removal of said supply items to said transaction account.

8. The method of dispensing of Claim 7, wherein said user manually selects said transaction account from a list of available transaction accounts.

9. The method of dispensing of Claim 8, wherein a portion of said list of available transaction accounts is displayed to said user according to said predetermined user access rights.

10. The method of dispensing of Claim 7, wherein said portion of said selection of said office supply items able to be accessed by said user are determined by a predetermined user spending limit.

11. The method of dispensing of Claim 7, further comprising assigning said user to a department, wherein said portion of said selection of said office supply items able to be accessed by said user is determined by a predetermined department spending limit.

12. The method of dispensing of Claim 7, wherein said authentication of user identification is achieved by reading electronic user identification, said method additionally comprising determining if said user is a new user and registering a name of said new user.

13. The method of dispensing of Claim 12, wherein said electronic user identification includes an identification of a department associated with said new user, said method additionally comprising assigning said new user to said associated department.

14. A method of controlled dispensing of consumable supplies, comprising:
providing a secured selection of consumable supply items, each of said items having a known weight;

providing a plurality of bins for storing said items, each bin having an associated weight sensor for determining the weight of said items within said bin;

authenticating the identification of a user of said items;

requesting said user to select a transaction account;

allowing said user to access a portion of said bins according to predetermined user access rights;

determining a quantity of said items added or removed from one of said plurality of bins by said user by determining a change in a weight of said bin;

recording said addition or removal of said items to said transaction account.

15. The method of Claim 14 wherein said user is prompted to correct the quantity of said items within said bin in response to an inconsistent weight reading from said weight sensor, said method additionally comprising asking user to count said items in said bin.

16. The method of Claim 15, additionally comprising creating a transaction log for each type of said item taken from said bin, said method additionally comprising logging said transaction to reflect said user taking a quantity of said items equal to difference of said items counted by said user and quantity of said items in said bin prior to said transaction.

17. The method of Claim 14, additionally comprising creating a transaction log for each type of said item taken from said bin, said method additionally comprising logging said transaction to reflect said user taking entire quantity of said items from said bin in response to a weight reading from said weight sensor being below a tare weight of said bin.

18. The method of Claim 17, additionally comprising creating an error log for each error associated with said transaction, said method additionally comprising logging said error to reflect said user affected a weight reading from said weight sensor.

19. The method of Claim 14, additionally comprising creating a transaction log for each type of said item added to said bin, said method additionally comprising logging said transaction to reflect said user adding maximum quantity of said items for said bin in response to a weight reading from said weight sensor being above a maximum limit of said weight sensor.

20. The method of Claim 19, additionally comprising creating an error log for each error associated with said transaction, said method additionally comprising logging said error to reflect said user overloaded said bin.

21. The method of Claim 20, wherein at least a portion of said consumable items have an expiration date, the method additionally comprising determining a transaction date and allowing access to said portion of said consumable items having an expiration date if the transaction date is on or before the expiration date.